



# The International Fancy Guppy Association



Dedicated to Promoting The Fancy Guppy Hobby

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## Visual Diseases and Their Treatment

By Stan Shubel

In past years it was possible to carry your fish to the shows along with water from your tanks to enter them in. As costs of travel and accommodations has risen so high, it is no longer possible to make all the shows as we did before.

At that time, and the way the fish were handled, disease problems were almost nonexistent. The same is no longer true; especially in the case of shipped in entries. Many breeders, including myself, do not like to ship fish to shows mainly because of losses due to disease or mishandling by the airlines. Additionally, in my own case, even if the fish should win Best of Show, if I can't see the competition, it doesn't mean anything to me.

But in order for the shows to survive, clubs must rely on shipped in fish to pay part of the cost of the show and if the breeder loses part or all of the fish he or she has sent to the show, the next show is going to suffer due to reduced entries. Most exhibitors do not have a sufficient number of show fish in reserve if they lose most of their entries.

Shipping and the subsequent handling of the fish causes them a great deal of stress. It is a wonder to me at times that they respond as well as they do.

Most of the time the fish, along with the water that they traveled in, are placed in a bowl with raw water'. The clubs usually add Clorox of some type along with possibly some stress coat in a plastic drum that has an airstone running. Usually this is set up the night before the show to try and condition the water somewhat. Undeniably this is better than water direct from the tap, but it is hardly as it is not practical to bring a hundred or more gallons of healthy fish tank water to a show, the next best thing would be to condition the water for the entries. The best way I have found to do this is with the addition of a product with natural enzymes or nonpathogenic live bacteria to the water. This material may cost the club an additional \$10 - \$20 but it is very effective in providing a healthy conditioned medium to place the fish into. From my own personal experience it has been very beneficial for stress reduction as well as reducing disease problems caused by water from other tanks.

Another less costly item would be to disinfect the net used to catch fish that are to be returned. This should be done between each exhibitors fish, or if any water problems are noted in the containers, even though it may be the same person's fish. The nets must be disinfected, not just rinsed out with water. I feel that it is vitally important that we make every effort to provide the optimum care for the shipped in fish if we are to continue to have successful shows.

With the introduction of some of the more exotic diseases from the Far East, procedures that we followed in the past no longer work. Previously I would take water from an established tank to add to a newly set up tank, and many times take a working corner filter and place it in a newly set up tank, let it run over night and put fish in it the next day. I followed this practice for almost 40 years.

Along came the clamping disease and everything changed. Those of you who read my article that I wrote last year about this disease will remember that I lost over 50 tanks of fish before

You will note that I say controllable because every once in a while it will reappear briefly, I treat it and it's gone for several months.

I am still not one hundred percent certain what this disease is. First I thought it was a virus as none of the medications I used had any effect on it and the way it hopped around the fishroom. I assumed it had to be airborne as there was no physical connection between the tanks. One thing I did note was that the catfish did not seem to be affected by it, which would make you think perhaps it was live-bearer related.

One of the fellows from down south had some, of his fish tested and found them to have skin flukes or gyrodactylus which caused his fish to clamp up like mine. They responded to a treatment of formaldehyde.

This made some sense to me at the time, but still couldn't explain how it could jump clear across the fishroom. Even then a straight formaldehyde treatment when used as a dip was ineffective in my fishroom. Eventually, I began to get some response by using Formalite II which contains a combination of formaldehyde, copper and nickel sulfate. In some of the badly infected tanks Super Velvet, which contains acriflavine and sodium chloride was also added. The fish were treated every other day three times.

An even more effective method was to set up a clean tank (disinfected with Clorox) add A.B.A., a new filter, 100% fresh water, a little bit of solar salt and let it run for 12 to 24 hours and transfer the sick fish into it. The following day I would treat the tank and usually the disease would be gone. This method is effective for many different diseases. Even now I observe this fish much more closely than I had done previously and if I note them hanging in a top corner I treat them immediately with the Formalite II. I found it does not pay to wait till they start to clamp up.

There is still a possibility that it was a virus that mutated to the point where it weakened or it was an airborne bacterial disease that didn't respond to the antibiotics that I was using, I really don't know but at least it is under control in my fishroom.



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------	------------	-------	----------	-------	-------------	----------	---------	-----------------

linexy, I added a little extra beyond what was recommended and lost some fish. If a second dose is required, wait four days before adding more. The day after the second dose is added, change 50% of the tank water - this worked well for me.

A couple of years ago another problem I had was the "thinning" disease. The fish's body would waste away to the point where it was almost a straight line and never fill up again. The fish would live for a month or so and just die. Again, none of the medications had any effect on the problem. I'm not sure who finally diagnosed what the problem was. It was found to be nematodes, a parasitic worm. The fish would continue to eat but it didn't do them any good because of the internal worms. We tried several different types of worm medicine and found that Discomed worked the best. The only problem was getting it into the fish as just adding it to the tank didn't work too well. What I ended up doing was not to feed the fish for one day, then I would take a capsule of discomed and mix it with some frozen adult brine shrimp that had been thawed out. The fish definitely did not like the taste but they were hungry and would eat it. After a couple of treatments, the problem disappeared.

Diseases and the severity as well as the response to medications will vary depending on the condition of the fish and your tank water. This makes it next to impossible to say that any particular medication will be 100% effective in all cases.

As for disease prevention, no one thing is the answer. Regular water changes would have to be near the top of the list, cleaning all sides and the bottom of the tank is important. Feeding quality foods without over feeding and causing excess bacteria build up. Do not overcrowd the tank. Observe the fish closely and treat at the first sign of disease.

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